

# Catholic Biblical Federation

**No. 31**

**2 / 1994**

**Bulletin**

*Dei  
Verbum*

**The Biblical Pastoral  
Ministry Three Years  
after the Fourth Plenary  
Assembly in Bogotá**

**\* \* \* Region**

**Africa (pg. 4)**

**\* \* \* Region**

**Americas (pg. 6)**

**\* \* \* Region**

**Asia/Oceania (pg. 13)**

**\* \* \* Region**

**Europe/Middle East  
(pg. 17)**

**\* \* \* Follow-up to the  
Bogotá Assembly  
(pg. 9-12)**

**English Edition**

The Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF) is an international fellowship of Catholic organizations involved in biblical-pastoral work. The members foster mutual service among all local churches.

Translation and distribution of Catholic and inter-confessional editions of the Bible in simple language, in cooperation with Bible Societies throughout the world, is part of this service.

Furthermore, it is the intention of the CBF to promote biblical studies, support the production of pedagogical aids for a better understanding of biblical texts, and assist in the formation of ministers of the Word (such as biblical animators, lectors and catechists), suggesting ways to form Bible groups and recommending the use of both mass and group media to facilitate their encounter with the Word.

The Federation also wishes to promote a dialogue with people who believe only in human values, as well as to encourage an encounter with the sacred writings of other religions. Through such encounters, the revealed Word of God can offer a more profound understanding of God and of human life.

The Federation appeals to everyone to add their personal and community support to these great tasks.

+ Alberto Ablondi, Bishop of Livorno  
President of the CBF

**" Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for  
all the Christian faithful"  
(Dei Verbum, 22).**

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## CONTENTS

* <b>The Biblical Pastoral Ministry and the Development of the Federation</b>	
- Region Africa	4
- Region The Americas	6
- Follow-up to the Bogotá Assembly	9
- Region Asia/Oceania	13
- Region Europe / Middle East	17

## EDITORIAL

Where does the biblical animation of the pastoral ministry stand thirty years after the promulgation of the Constitution *Dei Verbum*? How has it developed since the foundation of the Catholic Biblical Federation (CBF), which is active through 253 organizations in the 95 countries? To respond to these questions, the General Secretariat distributed a questionnaire in 1993 to all Federation members concerning the Part Five "practical recommendations" of the Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly, Bogotá, Colombia, 1990.

At the request of the general secretary, a selected commission analyzed and evaluated the replies. The commission consisted of 14 persons of the Major Theological Seminary of the Vincentian Fathers in Colombia under the direction of Fr Florencio Galindo, of the General Secretariat, Gabriel Naranjo, rector of the seminary, and Federation zonal coordinator of Países Bolivarianos zone. The Major Theological Seminary is the oldest Federation member in Latin America.

The work of the commission covered methodically two areas: synthesis and interpretation. These two areas were subcategorized into three headings: subregion, region, and worldwide. The subregional synthesis, summarizing the reports of the different countries and zones, will remain a consultative document, accessible to those interest-

ed. The subregional coordinators have received a copy of the information concerning their respective area. *Bulletin DEI VERBUM* offers in this issue the synthesis at the regional level (The Federation consists of four regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia/Oceania, Europe/Middle East.) as well as at the worldwide level (pages 9-12). Each synthesis was composed, following the scheme of the questionnaire, seven sections with three parts in each section: achievements, challenges and priorities. These elements were selected strictly from the Federation members' reports.

The Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council and the Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly acted as a backdrop to interpretation, the fourth part under each section. This part is the judgment of the commission and serves to illuminate or question material in any of the three preceding parts.

In the work of synthesis as well in that of interpretation, the commission proceeded according to the following criteria: team work, fidelity to the members' reports, a sense of moderation and precision, and a spirit of service to the Church and to the Federation.

In presenting the result of the work it should be noted that the biblical pastoral ministry is not limited to Federation members and that only 47% of the members replied:

Africa: of the 29 members 7 replied (24%).  
 North America: of the 13 members 3 replied (23%).  
 Latin America: of the 53 members 47 replied (89%).  
 Asia/Oceania: of the 61 members 31 replied (48%).  
 Europe/Middle East: of the 94 members 31 replied (33%).

Nevertheless, this sampling allows us to see the development and the challenges of the biblical pastoral ministry today. At the world level, the following aspects stand out: the impulse that it has received since the Fourth Plenary Assembly; the brake put on by clericalism; the engagement of laypeople; a general desire for interchange; a longing for a synod of bishops on the theme of the biblical pastoral ministry; the request for canceling foreign debts of the poor countries.

No doubt, the existence of the Federation has awakened the awareness to an essential but neglected dimension of the biblical pastoral ministry; however, we are just experiencing the beginning of this process. The present overview may be a motive for optimism, because of the many positive aspects reported from all regions, or a reason to intensify our efforts. It is encouraging to learn that the Federation, true to its original objectives, is rendering a good service to the whole Church and contributing to make that « the Lord's message continues to spread and be received with honor » (2 Th 3:1).

Florencio Galindo

# REGION AFRICA

## 1. Recommendations for the whole Church (Bogotá 8.1)

### a) Achievements

- \* There is a movement towards biblical pastoral ministry at the parochial, diocesan and national levels through organizations like committees, commissions and departments.
- \* There is an insistence on bringing about a Synod on the Word of God.

### b) Challenge

- \* To involve bishops and priests in biblical pastoral plans.

### c) Priorities

- \* To produce biblical pastoral plans at diocesan and parochial levels.
- \* To create Christian communities which share reflection on and knowledge of the Word of God periodically.
- \* To get the African Synod to address the biblical pastoral ministry.

### d) Interpretation

- \* Some bishops support the biblical pastoral ministry; however, in the majority of dioceses and parishes, it is restricted by a marked clericalism.
- \* Biblical pastoral ministry opens new directions in the apostolate despite its not being very structured.
- \* There is an insistence that the African Synod take note that the biblical pastoral ministry is a sign of the work of the Church throughout the continent.

## 2. Recommendations for the Catholic Biblical Federation (Bogotá 8.2)

### a) Achievements

- \* Recently a new regional coordinator was appointed.

- \* Contact is gradually being made between members at the country and regional level.

### b) Challenges

- \* To adapt the structures of the Federation to the realities and the necessities of the countries and the region.
- \* To establish interchanges between members at the zonal and entire regional levels.
- \* To bring about a common orientation for the whole continent.
- \* To maintain contact with the socio-cultural reality and with communities.

### c) Priorities

- \* To get the more active members to help the less active ones.
- \* To create contacts between the countries of the continent.

### d) Interpretation

- \* There is interest among members of the Federation for a combined effort by the Church involving bishops and laity.
- \* The sense of belonging to the CBF is poor which gives rise to passive attitude among some members towards the activities that they organize.
- \* A priority is to increase the members which, at present, is deficient.
- \* There is an urgent need for biblical pastoral plans that make the work of the Federation easier.

## 3. Recommendations to members - Material (Bogotá 8.3.1)

### a) Achievements

- \* Efforts are being made to translate the Bible and Lectionaries into the languages of the various countries and tribes, and to attempt an ecu-

menical translation; but, for lack of resources among Catholics this task is presently in the hands of the Bible Societies.

\* There are plans for the dissemination of Bibles but this is being thwarted by illiteracy, the peoples lack of means to acquire them, and the lack of Catholic translations.

\* Popular pamphlets are being produced and manuals for spiritual retreats, though the latter are not easy to follow.

\* There is a team involved with translating Dei Verbum into vernacular languages.

### b) Challenges

\* To disseminate the Bible and to prepare the people to understand, live and pray it.

\* To make more translations of the Bible into local languages.

### c) Priorities

\* To produce audio-visual material for the illiterate.

\* To produce enough Bibles at an affordable price.

\* To get the major seminaries to participate in the distribution of Bibles.

\* To adapt the New Catechism with questions and answers illustrated with biblical citations.

### d) Interpretation

\* Efforts are being made to translate the Bible and *Dei Verbum* into native languages.

\* Teams are working hard on translating and producing biblical material.

\* There is a great wish to respond creatively to the diversity of African culture in the production of biblical material that is suitable for illiterates.

\* The use of material from other continents could be encouraged.

## 4. Recommendations to members - Structures (Bogotá 8.3.2)

### a) Achievements

- \* Biblical committees exist; but, not many biblical pastoral plans exist at parochial and diocesan levels.

- \* There is a certain level of coordination in some episcopal conferences.
- \* There are pastoral centers that do promote biblical programs.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To get pastoral agents to encourage love of the Word of God among the grass roots.
- \* To infuse Church structures with a biblical sense.
- \* To establish centers for the biblical pastoral ministry.

#### *c) Priority*

- \* To form biblical pastoral teams at diocesan and parochial levels.

#### *d) Interpretation*

- \* There are structures at the episcopal conference and diocesan levels; but, action is lacking at the parochial and small community levels.
- \* There are incentives and openings for collaborative and ecumenical work in the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* There is a noteworthy presence of laity and religious.

### **5. Recommendations to members - Formation (Bogotá 8.3.3)**

#### *a) Achievements*

- \* Bishops are interested in sending young priests to biblical formation courses.
- \* The solid formation of coordinators is being sought.
- \* In some dioceses, plans for the formation of coordinators do exist; but, in the majority, the indications are that the formation courses are insufficient.
- \* There are courses for catechists dealing with knowledge of and reflection on some parts of the Bible.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To extend the biblical apostolate to other areas beyond the area of the catechesis.
- \* To form biblical animators in such a way that they are conscious of their commitment to the real state of things in their communities.

- \* To push for the proper formation of subregional and zonal coordinators.
- \* To promote the formation of animators, especially in those places where no specific formation exists.

#### *c) Priorities*

- \* To see to it that the formation of priests and religious is enriched by specific biblical training.
- \* To train animators for rural areas.
- \* To establish a regional seminary for the biblical apostolate.
- \* To utilize the monthly retreats of priests and seminary directors, to motivate them for biblical pastoral ministry.

#### *d) Interpretation*

- \* There is a marked interest among some bishops for suitable formation of priests and lay leaders for the biblical apostolate.
- \* There is a clear desire to focus the formation of priests and religious more and more on the Word of God and to begin preparation for the biblical pastoral ministry in the seminaries.
- \* Formation of agents is carried out more at the diocesan than the parochial level.
- \* To include a good number of specialists in Sacred Scripture would be advantageous for the formation of leaders.

### **6. Recommendations to members - Pastoral use of the Bible (Bogotá 8.3.4)**

#### *a) Achievements*

- \* There is progress in the methods of reading the Bible, seeking to illuminate better the socio-cultural reality.
- \* The Word of God every time illuminates more intensely the life of the communities and their pastoral organization.
- \* There are campaigns for disseminating Scripture through biblical conferences and workshops.
- \* Translations of the Bible have been a great help in promoting the biblical apostolate at grass roots level; but, there is a lack of pastoral plans which

emphasize and complete the efforts in translating and disseminating the Bible.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To see to it that the Word of God transforms the life of communities by means of the biblical apostolate.
- \* To open up ecumenical directions in the light of the Word of God, especially with the Muslims.
- \* To promote biblical conferences: day/week/month/year long.

#### *c) Priorities*

- \* To give creative impulse to methods of understanding and faithful reading of the Bible.
- \* To seek to make the liturgy more biblical and see that it reaches the people.

#### *d) Interpretation*

- \* The biblical pastoral ministry is being recognized as a means of meeting the needs of the continent.
- \* There are efforts to make the Bible more available for the communities in their regional languages and at a reasonable price.
- \* There is no balance between campaigns for circulation and the biblical apostolate.
- \* Biblical reading and reflection is necessary in small communities and the family, which throws light on reality.
- \* There is a perceived urgency for involving the efforts of the laity in pastoral work.
- \* There is an urgency to respond, with organized biblical work, to the Muslim invasion and the spread of fundamentalist sects.

### **7. Recommendations to members - Challenges of Today's Life (Bogotá 8.3.5)**

#### *a) Achievements*

- \* Principles for interpreting culture are being worked out in the light of the Bible.
- \* Inculturation is a central theme of the African Synod.

- \* The application of evangelical values to socio-economic challenges and social justice is already a tradition.
- \* In some places there are Christian sharing of goods and work with the poor.
- \* Bible sharing has brought young people together.
- \* The participation of women in biblical circles is good; but, the rejection of their leadership limits their apostolate.
- \* Pastoral ideals and plans exist in Africa; however, the war situation in some countries impedes the realization of them.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To use the Bible to promote union between faith and life.
- \* To use the Bible to throw light on human problems and values in the communities.

- \* To overcome the illiteracy problem.
- \* To resist fundamentalist sects.

#### *c) Priority*

- \* To study family life problems in the light of the Word of God.

#### *d) Interpretation*

- \* Worthwhile efforts are being made to throw light on economic problems and social justice by means of the Word of God.
- \* Ecumenical dialogue and efforts are seen to bring a greater effectiveness to the biblical apostolate.
- \* Women are evidently undervalued which limits their participation in biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* Ecological understanding is lacking and evident in the face of the grave environmental imbalance from which the continent suffers.

(scholastic) catechesis, in seminaries and in Church structures.

- \* To establish centers for biblical formation.

\* To organize conferences on biblical pastoral ministry at diocesan and national levels.

\* To promote the establishment of groups which would read, share, spread and live the Word of God.

\* To urge that the next Synod be on the Word of God.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* There is a great desire to situate the Word of God at the heart of the New Evangelization.

\* There has been progress in the methods of reading and reflecting on the Word of God, leading to a better interpretation of reality and clarity of principles, convictions, opinions and commitment; nevertheless, this process is checked in some cases by clericalism and reactionary movements.

\* Since the Fourth Plenary Assembly there have been notable efforts to organize the biblical pastoral ministry in some dioceses and episcopal conferences.

\* There have been fruitful experiences at the grass root level inspired, above all, by religious communities and by some parishes, with active involvement of the laity.

\* In North America biblical pastoral ministry is tied to the dioceses. In South America the experiences are at grass root level, though at the same time, linked with Church institutions like episcopal conferences, conferences of Religious and the CBF.

\* One is aware of the danger of the Bible being displaced by the catechism as well as of a fundamentalist reading of the Bible within the Church.

\* Biblical pastoral ministry is closer to the grass roots where it is to be found less bound up with institutional structures.

\* Biblical pastoral ministry is still spoken of as one more pastoral ministry and not as the use of the Bible in pastoral ministry.

\* The terminology used in the Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly identifies the Church with the episcopal conference and its structures.

## REGION THE AMERICAS

### **1. Recommendations for the whole Church (Bogotá 8.1)**

#### *a) Achievements*

- \* There is an openness in the majority of episcopal conferences to the biblical pastoral ministry and explicit support from some national catechetical commissions.
- \* Ecclesial movements, with extensive lay participation, draw inspiration from the centrality of the Word of God in the life of the Church.
- \* Some dioceses have significant projects in place; however, biblical pastoral plans are lacking in the majority of them.
- \* Biblical pastoral centers exist particularly at the parochial level.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To make the Word of God the main influence in the New Evangelization

and promote the formation of communities.

\* To include biblical pastoral ministry in the general pastoral ministry of the dioceses and not reduce it to sacramental catechesis and Sunday preaching.

\* To overcome a clerical mentality in both ministers and laity, which limits the activity of the laity and gives rise to the Word of God being fostered by fundamentalist groups.

\* To encourage the communication of experiences, plans and material between dioceses and episcopal conferences.

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To prepare and carry out biblical pastoral plans that favor the establishment of biblical circles, pastoral centers, the formation of agents (lay, native, Afro-American, seminarians, religious, priests and bishops).

\* To promote the use of the Bible in informal (family level) and formal

## 2. Recommendations for the Catholic Biblical Federation (Bogotá 8.2)

### a) Achievements

- \* The subregional organization of Latin America has been adequate and effective, maintaining good relations with CELAM. The zones and the respective coordinators, especially through visits, have helped with the contact and integration of the members.
- \* In Latin America the Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly, the review *La Palabra Hoy* and *Bulletin Dei Verbum* have given momentum to the biblical pastoral ministry and have helped in the formation of agents.
- \* In North America biblical pastoral ministry has its thrust at the level of specialized studies of the linguistic and exegetical kind.

### b) Challenges

- \* To disseminate the statutes of the Federation among members and to extend the sphere of action of its representatives.
- \* To promote the integration of the zone members and to ensure vitality and sharing.
- \* To make known the principles, activities and structures of the Federation among non-affiliated biblical institutions.

### c) Priorities

- \* To extend the communication network of experiences and material within the Federation.
- \* To undertake common biblical pastoral events among members of the Federation.
- \* To ensure the greatest possible number of representatives at Federation meetings.

### d) Interpretation

- \* The Final Statement and the periodicals of the Fourth Plenary Assembly have been very useful for the encouragement and activity of Federation members.
- \* The subregional organization of Latin America has been gaining shape

and effectiveness due principally to the determination of the coordinators.

\* In North America the Federation fulfills its commitment; but, a sense of belonging is lacking among members as well as actual knowledge of Federation philosophy and programs.

\* The statutes of Federation organization are not sufficiently known, not only among the various pastoral agents but also within the Federation itself.

\* The great majority of members are working at the grass root level; although, some do not operate with any sense of belonging to the Federation and tend to distance themselves from responsibility to the Federation.

## 3. Recommendations to members - Material (Bogotá 8.3.1)

### a) Achievements

- \* The Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly has been widely disseminated and studied.
- \* There have been campaigns for publishing the Bible for the popular sectors, in natives languages and at reasonable cost.
- \* The means of social communication are being used to disseminate the Word of God through audio-visual aids, radio programs, libraries and audio-graphic material.
- \* Material already existing has been adapted to particular circumstances of dioceses and parishes.
- \* New lectionaries have been published.
- \* In North America there is a substantial production of biblical material due to good financing.
- \* Biblical material for formation is plentiful and easy to follow; although, sometimes it is very technical and specialized.

### b) Challenges

- \* To utilize language that is didactic and popular in the production of material.
- \* To provide the people of God with inexpensive and large print Bibles.

\* To publish *Dei Verbum* in a popular version.

\* To publish audio-visual catechetical material and texts founded upon biblical references.

\* To use communication media more in biblical pastoral ministry.

### d) Interpretation

\* There is a greater awareness that the Bible should be in the hands of the people of God, particularly the poor.

\* Campaigns for disseminating the Bible are supported by plans for a faithful reading of it and a comprehensive vision of reality.

\* There is great concern to produce material which reaches the popular sectors, which encourages reflection and fosters formation of agents.

\* Efforts are being made to respond with adequate material to the modern world of visual image.

\* Collaboration between specialists in Sacred Scripture and in communication for the production of material is lacking.

## 4. Recommendations to members - Structures (Bogotá 8.3.2)

### a) Achievements

- \* Existing structures of the Federation are recognized.
- \* Institutions, schools, departments and faculties of biblical studies are being established, particularly for lay people.
- \* There is a notable involvement of religious communities and laypeople in formation centers and on biblical pastoral commissions.
- \* Mobile services of formation and animation are being implemented.

### b) Challenges

- \* To organize biblical pastoral plans to ensure continuous work and effective results in addressing reality.
- \* To promote structures which respond to the needs of those at the grass roots.
- \* To see to it that there are structures that ensure the formation of agents.

\* To see to it that the structures are really at the service of the Word of God and of lay people.

\* To stimulate further existing structures.

#### c) *Priorities*

\* To center pastoral ministry in general on the Word of God.

\* To promote native biblical commissions at diocesan and episcopal conference levels.

\* To encourage acquaintance and exchange among biblical pastoral agents.

\* To get professors of Sacred Scripture to relate studies to the pastoral ministry.

\* To secure self-financing for institutions.

#### d) *Interpretation*

\* The Fourth Plenary Assembly has provoked a creative search for new ways of structuring biblical pastoral ministry.

\* There is a marked interest in the structures encouraging the formation and involvement of the laity.

\* The religious life has offered its structures to support the biblical pastoral ministry and has contributed to the continuation of the work.

\* Biblical pastoral ministry is still dependent upon catechetical departments at diocesan and national levels.

### 5. Recommendations to members - Formation (Bogotá 8.3.3)

#### a) *Achievements*

\* Lay people and religious stand out in carrying out the biblical pastoral ministry and qualify themselves to be suitable for the task.

\* The biblical pastoral ministry has gained much from the training of agents in techniques of organization, methodology, etc.

\* In some diocesan and religious seminaries the Word of God is at the center of formation and the apostolate.

\* A good number of specialists in Sacred Scripture share their know-

ledge not only with seminarians and religious but also with lay people.

\* Formation of pastoral agents is being fostered through workshops, courses, conferences, radio programs and in seminaries; however, the awareness of the economic investment value of forming pastoral agents is lacking.

\* The number of persons who specialize in Sacred Scripture is gradually increasing.

#### b) *Challenges*

\* To set up specialist and interdisciplinary teams for biblical formation.

\* To overcome the dichotomy between faith and life in the light of the Word of God.

\* To continue to qualify agents in terms of content and methodology.

\* To prepare future priests to stress the central role of the Word of God in the New Evangelization.

\* To train specialists in Sacred Scripture.

\* To instill in the youth, catechists, and teachers a love of Sacred Scripture when training them.

\* To see to it that priestly formation takes serious account of the culture of the Latin American people.

\* To disseminate the valuable experiences of biblical pastoral formation that are being implemented in Latin America.

#### c) *Priorities*

\* To encourage a solid biblical formation of pastoral agents, including bishops, priests, religious, seminarians and laypeople.

\* To put in place plans for the spreading of the Word of God accompanied by adequate training in the new methods of Bible reading.

\* To involve in the biblical pastoral ministry the greatest possible number of priests and religious through a formation that corresponds to reality.

\* To bring together exegetes and specialists on various topics for the formation of agents.

\* To share experiences of biblical pastoral formation and activity.

#### d) *Interpretation*

\* There is a great desire for solid training of biblical pastoral agents.

This training helps to overcome functionalism and is especially oriented towards the laity.

\* There is an evident positive effort to implement training methods for biblical work, the centrality of the Word of God is forcing its way into the life of the Church.

\* Apart from some exceptions the Word of God is not central in priestly formation.

\* Specialists are being asked to use simple language and agents to get a better training.

\* In North America biblical pastoral ministry is strong in the areas of liturgy and catechetics.

### 6. Recommendations to members - Pastoral use of the Bible (Bogotá 8.3.4)

#### a) *Achievements*

\* The Bible is used in personal and community prayer.

\* The Bible is being read and reflected upon in all areas of Christian life and activity.

\* Christian communities centered on the Word of God are springing up.

\* Pastoral activities like preaching and catechetics are focusing more and more on the Word of God.

\* Bible reading is being continually enriched by the development of new methods.

#### b) *Challenges*

\* To encourage the education of communities that will ensure the centrality of the Word of God and the essential role of the laity.

\* To see to it that homilies are an up to date reflection on the Scripture reading.

\* To encourage Bible services where there is no priest available.

\* To complement serious exegesis with up to date hermeneutics.

\* To make people aware of the centrality of the Word of God in the Church and of the necessity of overcoming those who impede Sacred Scripture from reaching the people of God.

## Follow-up to the Bogotá Assembly

### The Biblical Pastoral Ministry Three Years after The Fourth Plenary Assembly in Bogotá

*In the light of the practical recommendations of the Fourth Plenary Assembly in Bogotá, 1990, the biblical pastoral ministry, as carried out by the members of the Federation, presents the following worldwide perspective.*

#### 1. Recommendations for the whole Church (Bogotá 8.1)

##### a) Achievements

\* There is an openness towards the biblical pastoral ministry by the majority of episcopal conferences, and explicit support by some bishops and national catechetical commissions.

\* Pastoral renewal in some dioceses is giving more importance to the pastoral biblical apostolate.

\* The Word of God is central in those ecclesial movements that support lay participation.

\* Biblical conferences/workshops are being held (missions, retreats, days, weeks, months, years) to promote the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* Some dioceses have significant projects for the pastoral biblical apostolate; but, a systematic plan is lacking in the majority of them.

##### b) Challenges

\* To overcome a marked clericalism in the Church's pastoral ministry which is observed in all five continents, at both the ministerial and lay level.

\* To overcome the tendency to restrict the biblical pastoral ministry to sacramental catechesis and preaching, which in many cases have a poor biblical content.

\* To make bishops, priests, religious and laity aware of the importance of the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To promote the pastoral ministry as a whole starting with the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To foster the sharing of experiences, schemes and material among dioceses and episcopal conferences.

##### c) Priorities

\* To formulate and carry out biblical pastoral plans.

\* To encourage the use of the Bible in seminaries and other Church structures.

\* To promote the proposal of a synod of bishops on the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To establish biblical associations, especially in some Eastern European countries.

\* To promote more biblical conferences/workshops.

##### d) Interpretations

\* There is a profound eagerness for situating the Word of God at the heart of the New Evangelization.

\* There has been progress in the methods of reading and reflecting upon the Word of God which has resulted in a better interpretation of reality and clarity of principles, convictions, options and obligations; but, clericalism and reactionary movements have put the brake on this process in some cases.

\* There are grass root experiences which are stimulated above all by religious communities and by some parishes with active participation by the laity.

\* The biblical pastoral ministry is closer to those base communities which are not so much bound to institutional structures.

\* Since the Fourth Plenary Assembly there has been a notable effort to organize the biblical pastoral ministry in some dioceses and episcopal conferences.

\* In some places the biblical pastoral ministry is characterized by foundational experiences without disregarding relations with ecclesial institutions, like, for example, episcopal conferences, conferences of religious, the Federation.

\* Bible groups are, for many of the faithful, the only contact with the Church, especially in Eastern Europe.

\* One notices the danger of displacing the Bible by the catechism, as much as of a fundamentalist reading of the Bible within the Church.

\* The biblical pastoral ministry is still spoken of as a branch of the pastoral work among others, and not of the biblical animation of the pastoral ministry as a whole.

\* Some bishops and episcopal conferences show no interest in the biblical pastoral ministry. The Church has not promoted an inculturated pastoral biblical apostolate.

\* The laity show great interest in the biblical pastoral ministry but some hierarchies and clerics are indifferent towards it.

#### 2. Recommendation to the Catholic Biblical Federation (Bogotá 8.2)

##### a) Achievements

\* The zonal and subregional organization is good and the animation is effective thanks to sharing and meetings between members, as well as the visits and good offices of the coordinators and the general secretariat.

\* The number of members is increasing.

\* Knowledge of the Federation and its effectiveness has been helped by the wide distribution of the documents from the Fourth Plenary Assembly.

\* Relations between the Federation and Church institutions are good.

\* Direct communication between members is good in Latin America.

##### b) Challenges

\* To make effective the structures of the Federation by conditioning them to the initiatives and needs of each region.

\* To continue insisting on the recommendations of the Fourth Plenary

Assembly and to point out what has been achieved.

\* To make known the principles, activities and structures of the CBF among non-affiliated biblical institutions and among members.

\* To encourage new members to join the Federation.

\* To foster mutual support among members.

#### c) *Priorities*

\* To establish programs that would help with the sharing of material, experience and communication among the subregions.

\* To achieve a majority participation of representatives in Federation gatherings.

#### d) *Interpretation*

\* The document of the Fourth Plenary Assembly and the reviews as well as the role of the general secretariat and that of the coordinators have been very useful for the animation and integration of the members and a stimulus to the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* Links between episcopal conferences and dioceses and the Federation have increased.

\* Where the CBF is more vibrant, its contact with Church institutions is stronger.

\* The presence of the Federation is more notable in Latin America and Asia. In Europe it does exist; but, relationship between members is lacking.

\* The associate members, more than the full members, support and maintain a real pastoral biblical apostolate even though they do not feel they belong to the Federation to the same extent.

\* There are institutions that do not belong to the Federation that do more for the biblical pastoral ministry than do members themselves.

\* In the majority of cases one notices that experiences of the biblical pastoral ministry need to be shared among members.

\* The Federation is not sufficiently known even among its members, and even less so at the general level of the Church.

\* The thrust of the North American and European members is towards specialization.

### 3. Recommendations to Members - Material Bogotá 8.3.1)

#### a) *Achievements*

\* The Bible is being translated into local languages and diffused at low cost.

\* In Europe and North America exegetical, pastoral, doctrinal and methodological materials are published; in Latin America and Asia books, manuals and pamphlets for practical use are circulated.

\* *Dei Verbum* is translated and disseminated.

\* The Fourth Plenary Assembly concluding documents are widely circulated.

\* Biblio-liturgical material is produced.

\* Material is shared among those working in the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* Means of social communication such as audio-visual aids and radio programs are promoted.

\* Ecumenical Bibles and materials are produced; however, in Africa there are considerable limitations.

#### b) *Challenges*

\* To translate the Bible into local languages.

\* To promote publication of scenic and methodological material.

\* To disseminate biblical material among base communities.

\* To secure financing for material and every kind of biblical activity.

#### c) *Priorities*

\* To publish and disseminate editions of the Bible, *Dei Verbum*, and other important works in local languages at low cost.

\* To accompany the dissemination of Bibles with formation for readers.

\* To make available and to share material on a permanent basis in the various regions.

\* To intensify the Means of Social Communication (MSC) in the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To support the biblical pastoral ministry in Africa by sharing both workers and material.

#### d) *Interpretation*

\* One notices the concern to respond creatively to cultural diversity by

producing material for all situations and surroundings because there is a greater awareness that the Bible should be in the hands of the People of God, the poor above all.

\* The campaigns for the circulation of the Bible are supported by formation plans for a faithful reading and a comprehensive vision of reality.

\* In Europe there is an abundance of scientific material, while in the other continents there is an abundance of pastoral material.

\* In terms of biblical material Europe has the most possibilities; Africa is the poorest; America makes efforts to produce material for the popular sectors; Asia takes aspects from each one of the other three regions.

\* Africa is asking the other regions for help in the areas of personnel and material.

\* There is a worldwide concern to make use of the communication media in a creative way as a concrete response to the modern world of visual images.

\* Collaboration between specialists in Sacred Scripture and the social communication media for the production of material is still lacking.

\* The need for sharing material at more than the basic level was noted under *Challenges* and *Priorities*.

### 4. Recommendations to Members - Structures Bogotá 8.3.2)

#### a) *Achievements*

\* Structures in the Federation adequately exist; but, in some parts they founder through lack of plans or creativity.

\* Biblical committees and groups exist; but, not many plans exist for the biblical pastoral ministry at the diocesan and parochial levels.

\* Biblical pastoral organizations get stronger inasmuch as their dependence upon related institutions diminishes.

\* Bible study institutes for biblical studies for laypeople, religious and priests have been established, and also biblical pastoral ministry centers.

\* In some regions, mobile services for animation and formation are being introduced.

\* There is notable participation by religious communities and laity in

formation centers and on biblical pastoral commissions.

\* Ecumenical contacts are being institutionalized thanks to the development of the biblical pastoral ministry.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To create biblical pastoral structures and plans at diocesan and parochial levels.

\* To inspire Church structures with a biblical sense.

\* To establish a firm relationship between the structures and the grass roots.

\* To build up the presence of laity within these structures.

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To focus pastoral activity in general on the Word of God.

\* To establish independent departments of biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To supply the necessary personnel to the animating organizations.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* The Fourth Plenary Assembly has provoked a creative investigation into new forms for structuring the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* The good relations between Catholic biblical associations and Church structures has contributed to the vitalization of both and to the dynamism of the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* One notices an eagerness to focus pastoral work on the Word of God.

\* The structures which deal with formation are the ones that give most stimulus to the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* One notices a marked interest for intensifying the participation and formation of the laity.

\* More than the structures it is the personal contact with the Bible that contributes to arousing the faith in the people.

\* The biblical pastoral ministry still depends on the departments of catechesis at national and diocesan levels.

### **5. Recommendations to the Members - Formation (Bogotá 8.3.3)**

#### *a) Achievements*

\* Doctrinal and methodological, elementary and specialized formation

is offered in abundance.

\* There is an interest among the lay workers for a formation and they in turn share it with others in workshops, groups and courses.

\* There is a focus of formation and the apostolate of the seminarians on the Word of God. Bishops and priests assume this as a starting point for their life and mission.

\* The bishops are concerned about a biblical specialization, above all by priests.

\* Biblical retreats are organized for priests, religious and laity.

\* With the exception of Europe, specialists in Sacred Scripture share their knowledge with seminarians and the grass roots and animate Bible groups.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To prepare specialists in Sacred Scripture.

\* To provide basic biblical formation at the popular level.

\* To equip workers with methodology and content.

\* To succeed in making the Word of God the soul of formation for priests and religious.

\* To constitute specialized and interdisciplinary teams of formation.

\* To inculcate a biblical sense in the religious teaching in schools and colleges.

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To promote the permanent biblical formation of bishops, priests, seminarists, religious and laity.

\* To accompany dissemination of Bibles with methods of Bible reading.

\* To make sure that professors of Sacred Scripture relate study of the Bible with pastoral ministry.

\* To encourage an ecumenical character in biblical formation.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* Plans for biblical formation are taking into account the role of the laity in the New Evangelization without discarding the importance of the clergy and religious.

\* Biblical formation is directed as much at specialists as at the grass roots and covers both theory and practice.

\* Biblical formation is fundamental for overcoming mere functionalism among agents in the field.

\* Formation in seminaries still does not promote nor support satisfactorily the specific work of the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* The whole plan of biblical formation should make sure of personal contact with the Word of God and lead to an experience of prayer.

\* Europe and Africa represent the extremes of what is happening in formation: in the former there is competence but little feeling for the pastoral aspect; in the latter preaching is diminished while the pastoral work is sufficient.

\* Biblical formation should inspire the substitution of a materially based education for a personal and liberating one.

\* The preparation of specialists in Sacred Scripture and biblical pastoral agents is a matter of urgency, especially in Africa.

### **6. Recommendations to the Members - Pastoral Use of the Bible (Bogotá 8.3.4)**

#### *a) Achievements*

\* There is support for the biblical pastoral ministry within the pastoral ministry overall.

\* There is a dissemination of simple methods of faithful reading of the Bible that has contributed to the emergence and formation of bible groups and Base Ecclesial Communities (CEB).

\* Ministers of the Word are emerging who animate and organize group reflection.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To persuade people that the Word of God is the support of the New Evangelization and promotes the formation of communities.

\* To get pastoral agents to foster love of the Word of God at grass root level.

\* To encourage the formation of communities in which the Word of God is the foundation and lay people take over an active role.

\* To draw up methods and plans for the faithful reading of the Word of God.

\* To elaborate strategic plans for the pastoral use of the Bible.

\* To continue to give a more biblical flavor to the liturgy and to homilies.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To affirm the relationship between the Bible, community and reality.
- \* To promote contextual reading methods that affirm a popular reading and an ecumenical dimension.
- \* To produce biblical commentaries that support a faithful Bible reading.
- \* To promote biblical meetings at diocesan and community levels.
- \* To train for the ministry of the Word, especially in the CEB's.
- \* To urge that the Bible becomes the foundation of the priestly ministry.
- \* To try to make the liturgy more biblical and reach the people.

*d) Interpretation*

- \* One notices a great development in the biblical pastoral ministry. In fact the Word of God is beginning to be the soul of all pastoral ministry.
- \* New emerging communities are, at the same time, the place of the Word of God and the result of it.
- \* Interest in Europe in the formation of lay animators is growing as a response to the scarcity of priestly and religious vocations. In other continents it is due to a more ministerial concept of the Church.
- \* The popular sectors read, interpret and live profoundly the Word of God.
- \* One senses the urgency to integrate the laity more in pastoral work.
- \* There is no balance between campaigns for dissemination of the Bible and the biblical apostolate.

**7. Recommendations - Challenges of Today's Life (Bogotá 8.3.5)***a) Achievements*

- \* The Word of God illuminates reality, denounces injustice and abuses of human rights, promotes the seeking of solutions and enlivens the prophetism of believers.
- \* The dialogue between biblical culture and indigenous cultures is growing.
- \* Agents of the Word are being formed among the indigenous peoples of Latin America.
- \* Christian reflection about justice and peace has a marked biblical orientation.
- \* Pastoral ideals and plans exist in Africa; however, the war situation in some countries impedes the realization of them.

- \* The poor make the Word of God their own and this contributes to their identity and affirms their values.
- \* There is a surmounting individual assistance of the Church by the community commitment to the reality of the poor.
- \* Ecumenical cooperation with sectors of the historical Protestantism occurs; but, the development of fundamentalist sects in certain areas of the Church and society continues where a biblical formation is deficient.
- \* The biblical pastoral ministry is developing for the youth and is conducted for the family.

- \* Women's participation in biblical circles is good despite the fact that in some regions their leadership is rejected so limiting their apostolate.
- \* Biblical spirituality of creation has risen due to ecological and especially human problems.

*b) Challenges*

- \* To illuminate ecological, socio-political and cultural problems with the Word of God.
- \* To intensify the process of the inculturation of the Word of God.
- \* To make the Word of God purify popular devotions and move to action.
- \* To promote the pedagogy of images and symbols of the indigenous peoples of Latin America.
- \* To take account of the celebrative and festive soul of the Latin American people.
- \* To assure the participation of women in the New Evangelization and the biblical apostolate.
- \* To announce the Word of God to young people and children and to integrate their expressions in the experience of the faith.
- \* To make sure that the biblical pastoral ministry promotes relationships with other religions.
- \* To overcome totalitarian and reactionary tendencies within the Church through a solid biblical formation.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To introduce the Bible gradually in multicultural environments.
- \* To promote a commitment to the marginalized in the light of the Word of God.
- \* To announce the God of life as revealed as contrasted with a culture of death.

- \* To overcome protestant and catholic fundamentalism through a faithful reading of the Bible.
- \* To become acquainted with other sacred books.
- \* To achieve a biblical pastoral ministry that deals specifically with children, young people, workers, families, old people.
- \* To link the biblical pastoral ministry with the international year of the family.
- \* To speed up the campaign for the sabbatical year which cancels the foreign debt of the poor countries.

*d) Interpretation*

- \* The reading of Sacred Scripture prepares one to accept the values of the culture which is to come and neutralizes its antivalues.
- \* The Word of God is a focus of unity within cultural pluralism.
- \* Reference to the Word of God involves the Church with persons, communities, society and their problems.
- \* The Word of God should unleash the process of social transformation for the whole world.
- \* The poor awaken the conscience of the reader of the Word of God in community.
- \* It is a concern in a young country like Latin America that the relationship between the biblical pastoral ministry and youth is not stressed enough.
- \* Women have a predominant role in the assimilation and spread of the Word of God; but, their collaboration is often asked with utilitarian mentality, not at the level of co-responsibility.
- \* One notices a clear awareness of the problem of fundamentalism and an effort to overcome it. However, in some cases it reflects an apologetic attitude.
- \* One notices that ecumenical dialogues and efforts aid a greater effectiveness in the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* In Europe the awareness of social and ecological problems is gradually being enlightened by the Word of God.
- \* In Africa the lack of ecological understanding is evident in the face of the grave environmental unbalance from which the continent suffers.

(cont. from pg. 8)

\* To make more available Council and Church documents concerning the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To get the biblical pastoral ministry to root itself in the historical memory of the people and in their own culture.

\* To encourage teaching native peoples by means of pictures and symbols.

\* To take account of the celebrative and festive spirit of the Latin American people.

#### c) Priorities

\* To promote biblical meetings at diocesan and community levels.

\* To seek to make the Word of God the foundation of priestly ministry.

\* To promote methods of contextual reading which affirm, at the same time, a popular reading and an ecumenical dimension.

\* To ensure that the parish be a community of communities starting from the Word of God.

\* To affirm the dynamic and dialectic relationship that exists between Bible - community - reality.

#### d) Interpretation

\* The Word of God is influencing, more and more, pastoral plans and the formation of communities.

\* The popular sectors of the Church are reading, interpreting and living the Word of God intensely.

\* Pastoral use of the Bible is approached from the sociocultural context and the community.

\* Communities are, at the same time, a place where the Bible is read and a result of it.

\* There is a growing dialogue between biblical culture and native culture thanks to the efforts of ethno-linguistic groups.

\* The poor are availing themselves of the Word of God which is contributing to the identification and affirmation of their worth.

\* Biblical centers are being set up in local areas.

\* Biblical agents are being formed among native peoples.

\* Compared to before, women have begun to approach the Scriptures from the stand point of their own reality.

\* Biblical pastoral ministry is being directed towards the family and towards migrants.

\* The formation of lay agents has helped to counteract fundamentalism.

#### b) Challenges

\* To respond to culture as it develops.

\* To intensify the process of inculturation.

\* To integrate the oral culture of native peoples.

\* To proclaim the Word of God to young people and children and to integrate their expressions into their understanding of it.

\* To use the Word of God to throw light on the ecological problem.

#### c) Priorities

\* To proclaim the God of life manifested in revelation as opposed to the culture of death.

\* To link the biblical pastoral ministry with the Year of the Family.

\* To organize seminars on faithful reading of the Bible.

\* To promote the campaign for the sabbatical year canceling the foreign debt of poor countries.

#### d) Interpretation

\* The reading of Sacred Scripture prepares one to accept the values of the developing culture and to neutralize its anti-values.

\* The Word of God is a focus of unity amidst cultural pluralism.

\* Women have a preponderant role in the assimilation and spreading of the Word of God.

\* It is worrying that in a young continent the relationship between the biblical pastoral ministry and youth is not clearly appreciated.

\* In North America reflection is given more importance; the biblical pastoral ministry is carried out in a creative way at the level of the family and among the youth.

## REGION ASIA/OCEANIA

### 7. Recommendations to members - Challenges of Today's Life (Bogotá 8.3.5)

#### a) Achievements

\* The Word of God throws light on reality, denounces injustice and abuses of human rights, encourages a search for solutions and animates the prophetic role of believers.

\* The Bible is read in the light of reality and reality in the light of the Bible.

### 1. Recommendations for the whole Church (Bogotá 8.1)

#### a) Achievements

\* Some episcopal conferences have organized the biblical pastoral ministry through catechetical commissions and biblical committees.

\* In the renewal of the pastoral ministry in general some dioceses

are giving more importance to the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* Biblical conferences are being held (Sundays, week, month, and year long) in order to promote the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* The Asiatic congress of evangelization is developing the biblical pastoral ministry.

#### b) Challenges

\* To improve the biblical content in sermons and homilies, which otherwise would create dissatisfaction among the faithful.

- \* To make bishops, priests, religious and laity aware of the importance of the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To renew the pastoral ministry by affirming the role of the Bible at the levels of episcopal conferences, dioceses and parishes.
- \* To create a sharing of works of the biblical pastoral ministry at the continental level.
- \* To train committed leaders at diocesan and parochial levels.

#### c) Priorities

- \* To promote biblical activities at diocesan and parochial levels, such as conferences and courses.
- \* To create biblical pastoral teams at diocesan and parochial levels.
- \* To promote the proposal for a Synod of bishops on the biblical pastoral ministry.

#### d) Interpretation

- \* The leading role of the Word of God in evangelization is developing.
- \* There is progress in the renewal of parochial and diocesan programs on the biblical apostolate.
- \* Bishops' letters are an instrument of motivation and orientation for pastoral work.

## 2. Recommendations to the Catholic Biblical Federation (Bogotá 8.2)

#### a) Achievements

- \* Zonal and subregional organization is good: animation is effective thanks to sharing among members through visits and meetings; however, in other zones communication is lacking among members which leads to poor participation in the activities of the Federation.
- \* The Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly has been disseminated providing a greater knowledge of the Federation and its principles and objectives.
- \* There is cooperation going on with other biblical associations.
- \* New members are joining the Federation.

#### b) Challenges

- \* To make the structures of the Federation effective.
- \* To increase communication between members of the Federation.
- \* To try to get new members to join the Federation.
- \* To seek financial support for biblical apostolate programs with limited resources.

#### c) Priorities

- \* To know and apply the practical recommendations of the Fourth Plenary Assembly.
- \* To set up programs that favor sharing and cooperation between the subregions.
- \* To unify the efforts of members that promote the training of the laity.
- \* To continue the visits of subregional coordinators.
- \* To set up a directive team with subregional coordinators.

#### d) Interpretation

- \* The presence of the Federation is a force in this continent.
- \* Communication between members for the most part is good.
- \* There is a desire to link the dioceses with the Federation to unify the biblical pastoral ministry.

## 3. Recommendations to the members - Material (Bogotá 8.3.1)

#### a) Achievements

- \* There is a large print, ecumenical translation of the Bible in local languages, and it is being disseminated at low cost.
- \* There is government subsidy for the publication of Bibles destined for groups, education centers, and retreat centers.
- \* There are biblical-liturgical commentaries in various languages and biblical songs composed for the liturgy.
- \* *Dei Verbum* has been translated into local languages making it more accessible to the faithful.
- \* There are biblical libraries and displays of material in some parishes.
- \* There is sharing of material between some areas of the biblical pastoral ministry.

#### b) Challenges

- \* To increase the translation of texts and biblical commentaries into local languages for the benefit of the communities.
- \* To involve lay people in the production of biblical material.
- \* To prepare audio-visual material for the illiterate.
- \* To see to it that pastoral agents study in depth *Dei Verbum*.

#### c) Priorities

- \* To enrich ecumenical translations with introductions and pastoral commentaries.
- \* To make Bibles available to the common run of people.
- \* To press for Catholic translations of the Bible.
- \* To set up plans for Bible weeks which support the work of dioceses and parishes.
- \* To draw up a biblical pastoral bibliography.
- \* To publish periodically a bulletin of biblical pastoral activities and events.

#### d) Interpretation

- \* One senses the urgency for translating the Bible and biblical material into local languages.
- \* One perceives efforts for the creative production of biblical material adapted to the conditions of the people.
- \* There are efforts to make biblical material accessible to the public sectors.
- \* Sharing material is giving rise to cooperation between pastoral agents.
- \* There is concern to use the media in the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* The Final Statement of the Fourth Plenary Assembly has contributed to the way in which the biblical apostolate is being renewed.

## 4. Recommendations to the members - Structures (Bogotá 8.3.2)

#### a) Achievements

- \* Some episcopal conferences have a commission for the biblical apostolate.

- \* There is cooperation between biblical associations and dioceses.
- \* Biblical centers and institutions are being acquired for the formation, animation and coordination of the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* There are efforts to involve lay people in diocesan structures.

#### *b) Challenges*

- \* To set up structures for promotion and cooperation at diocesan and parochial levels.
- \* To get the structures to promote true Christian life centered on the Word of God.
- \* To establish independent departments for the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To integrate institutions dedicated to the biblical apostolate.
- \* To promote the biblical apostolate within religious communities.

#### *c) Priorities*

- \* To produce plans for biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To set up Bible groups which will, in turn, promote the biblical apostolate.
- \* To ensure the financing of projects, centers and commissions for biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To increase the presence of the laity in the structures.

#### *d) Interpretation*

- \* There are evident efforts being made to center pastoral work in the Word of God.
- \* The existing structures in the region are sufficient; but, they need more biblical inspiration and more projection.
- \* In some cases the biblical apostolate is being slowed down through lack of resources.

### **5. Recommendations to the members - Formation (Bogotá 8.3.3)**

#### *a) Achievements*

- \* Biblical formation is above all reflective though without discarding methodology and covers both elementary and specialist levels.
- \* Lay agents receive a solid doctrinal and methodological formation which,

in turn, they pass on through workshops, courses and Bible circles.

\* Formation in seminaries is centering more on the Word of God. Bishops, priest, seminarians, and religious are taking it as a starting point for their life and mission.

\* Specialists in Sacred Scripture share their knowledge with ordinary folk and encourage Bible groups.

\* Biblical retreats are organized for priests, religious and laypeople.

\* In Oceania there are no formation institutes but a center is being set up to implement a correspondence course.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To see to it that the Word of God is at the center of the spirituality and mission of gospel agents.

\* To provide a basic biblical formation for people in which they can center themselves in the Word of God.

\* To foster the involvement of the laity and their biblical formation by overcoming clericalism.

\* To ensure resources, (specialist) human and economic, for the training of biblical pastoral ministry agents.

\* To encourage, with adequate training, the Means of Social Communication (MSC).

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To increase the number of lay agents of biblical pastoral ministry and ensure their training.

\* To promote biblical spirituality and the biblical apostolate among seminarians and religious.

\* To organize biblical groups for reflection, prayer and action.

\* To promote biblical formation with an ecumenical character.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* Any formation plan should start from personal contact with the Word of God and through it ensure prayer that is full of faith and biblical flavor.

\* Formation takes very much into account the leading role of the laity in the New Evangelization, and even the necessity to give them an identity through reference to the Word of God; but, formation also puts great value on the preparation of priests and religious.

\* Biblical formation covers both specialist and basic levels in both theory and practice and establishes a relationship between the extremes.

\* Although the formation of agents is insisted upon there are also attempts to reach the basic level of the people of God.

\* It seems that formation in seminaries neither encourages nor supports direct work in the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* At the operative level it is important to concentrate on a personal and liberating formation.

\* There appears to be a certain void in the quest for and preparation of catechists. These are not properly formed when they do not get biblical training.

### **6. Recommendations to the members - Pastoral use of the Bible (Bogotá 8.3.4)**

#### *a) Achievements*

\* The biblical pastoral ministry is finding a place at the center of pastoral ministry.

\* Simple methods of Bible reading are spreading which have contributed to the emergence and formation of Bible groups and Basic Ecclesial Communities (CEB).

\* Positive results of the biblical pastoral ministry has caused the animators to be overloaded with work.

\* Lay people have a leadership role in evangelization; they are, in fact, the principal animators of the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* Families enthrone the Bible in their houses, pray round it, and, like other groups, recite the rosary.

\* Biblical conferences (Sundays, week/month long) unleash the animation and organization of the Christian life.

\* There is an emergence of ministers of the Word who animate and organize group reflection.

\* There is a real biblical orientation in homilies which animates Christian life.

\* The radio is being used to spread the biblical messages.

*b) Challenges*

- \* To get the Bible to the center of the apostolate.
- \* To draw up methods and plans of reading the Word of God, supporting them with biblical commentaries.
- \* To draw up strategic plans for pastoral use of the Bible.
- \* To organize Bible circles which are converted into CEB's.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To animate the liturgy with biblical celebrations at which young people, families and congregations participate.
- \* To see to it that biblical reading, reflection and prayer throw light on reality.
- \* To make biblical commentaries which aid a faithful reading of the Bible.
- \* To promote roving works of biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To exercise the ministry of the Word, especially in the CEB's.

*d) Interpretation*

- \* The Word of God is beginning to be the soul of pastoral ministry.
- \* The MCS are sufficiently used as main channels of awareness.
- \* The biblical pastoral ministry has a close relation with the CEB's; in fact efforts are concentrated on forming communities inspired by the Word of God.

## 7. Recommendations to the members - Challenges to Today's Life (Bogotá 8.3.5)

*a) Achievements*

- \* The biblical pastoral ministry is gradually linking up with the cultural diversity of the region and with the working conditions of the people.
- \* The Bible is read and utilized in a prophetic way.
- \* There are biblical seminars/workshops and plans on the signs of the times, inculturation and socio-cultural problems.
- \* Great efforts are being made to throw light on the challenges of reality

by means of the Word of God: justice, human rights, inculturation, ecology, defense of life, family, the signs of the times.

- \* There is a concern about pseudo-Christian fundamentalist movements, biblical studies that deal with them and cooperative ecumenical actions.
- \* Women occupy an important role in the organization of the Church and are very active in the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* Organization of pastoral ministry to the youth is developing.
- \* Biblical readings in the liturgy are chosen to prioritize the situation of believers.

*b) Challenges*

- \* To relate the Gospel to the contradictions in reality, the needs of the people and the option for the poor.
- \* To make the Word of God purify popular devotions and motivate action.
- \* To involve women in the biblical pastoral ministry and in the New Evangelization.
- \* To nourish the CEB's with the Word of God.
- \* To use the Word of God to throw light on ecological, socio-political and cultural problems.
- \* To see to it that the biblical pastoral ministry encourages relations with other religions.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To overcome fundamentalism by means of biblical formation.
- \* To inculcate among students clear principles and convictions concerning God and the faith.

\* To train agents of biblical formation for young people.

- \* To establish a specialized biblical pastoral ministry - for young people, workers, the family.
- \* To become acquainted with other sacred books of other religions.
- \* To adapt biblical plans and materials to culture.
- \* To develop by means of biblical education, commitment to the marginalized.
- \* To put pressure on states to cancel the foreign debt of poor countries.

*d) Interpretation*

- \* Reference to the Word of God commits the Church to persons, communities, society and all their problems.
- \* The Word of God highlights the social obligation of believers, especially to the poor.
- \* There is an important concern to purify popular religion through a reading of the Bible that instills commitment to reality, above all to the poor.
- \* Biblical pastoral ministry reflects diversity of creeds and endeavors to set in motion a deeply felt ecumenical openness.
- \* There is a clear understanding of the problem of fundamentalism and an effort to overcome it; although, in some cases there is reflected an apologetic attitude.
- \* Diverse social groups are, at the same time, agents and objects of biblical pastoral ministry: women, young people, workers, the poor.
- \* Pastoral ministry to young people should take advantage of inculcating a love for the Word of God.

**« Just as the life of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration for God's Word, which "lasts forever" (Is 40:8; cf. 1 Pet 1:23-25) »**

**(Dei Verbum 26)**

## REGION EUROPE/ MIDDLE EAST

### 1. Recommendations for the whole Church (Bogotá 8.1)

#### a) Achievements

- \* Bishops are supporting the biblical apostolate by means of their pastoral letters.
- \* Episcopal conferences and various biblical associations maintain close contact.
- \* In dioceses biblical conferences are being carried out (days/week/month/year long) and in collaboration with the respective episcopal conference.
- \* In some dioceses numerous biblical pastoral centers have been founded.
- \* Retreats that are biblical from beginning to end are being conducted.
- \* Mission tasks are being drawn up with a strong biblical base.

#### b) Challenges

- \* To make bishops and their co-workers aware of the importance of the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* To see to it that the biblical pastoral ministry animates the whole of pastoral work.
- \* To coordinate biblical pastoral initiatives already existing.
- \* To produce better systematized biblical pastoral plans.
- \* To promote the biblical formation of adults in parishes.

#### c) Priorities

- \* To appoint diocesan coordinators for a specific time with a minimum of three years.
- \* To found biblical associations, especially in some Central European countries.
- \* To put more biblical content into liturgical celebrations and preaching.
- \* To make the celebration of biblical conferences more general.
- \* To institute Bible schools.
- \* To promote a Synod of bishops on biblical pastoral ministry.

- \* To ensure the financing of coordinating organizations.

#### d) Interpretation

- \* Lay people are showing great interest in the biblical apostolate but some hierarchies and clergy are indifferent towards it.
- \* Some bishops and episcopal conferences show no interest in the biblical pastoral ministry.
- \* For many of the faithful biblical groups are their only contact with the Church.
- \* It appears that bishops are not acquainted with the recommendations of the Fourth Plenary Assembly.

### 2. Recommendations for the Catholic Biblical Federation (Bogotá 8.2)

#### a) Achievements

- \* Federation members have held meetings which have contributed to better coordination at both regional and subregional levels.
- \* Efforts are being made to put into practice the recommendations of the Fourth Plenary Assembly.
- \* The contact between members, where it exists, vitalizes the subregion and its coordination.
- \* The region appreciates the role of the general secretariat as supporting and invigorating its work, especially through the publication of *Bulletin Dei Verbum*.
- \* The visits by the general secretary to the institutions of the Church are found to be beneficial.

#### b) Challenges

- \* To continue to implement the recommendations of the Fourth Plenary Assembly and their achievements so far.

- \* To encourage relations between members of the Federation and between them and the people at the grass roots.

- \* To develop to the maximum human and financial resources of the national biblical associations.

- \* To establish relations between biblical associations and between them and the Federation.

- \* To overcome, with actions of the pastoral kind, the purely academic dimension of activities.

- \* To involve members in economic help for poor regions.

#### c) Priorities

- \* To organize exchanges of material and experiences at regional and subregional levels.

- \* To institutionalize or consolidate biblical conferences.

- \* To participate, as members of the Federation, in the Synod of European Bishops.

#### d) Interpretation

- \* The Fourth Plenary Assembly has echoed loudly among members of the Federation in their biblical pastoral work and has helped to bring out the role of the general secretariat.

- \* The sense of belonging to the Federation varies from one subregion to another.

- \* There have been efforts to involve the hierarchy in biblical pastoral ministry.

- \* A certain eagerness for team work is noticeable.

- \* Achievements stand out in relation to the Federation and not so much with the biblical pastoral work.

- \* Lack of communication impoverishes the life of the zones and regions.

### 3. Recommendations to the members - Material (Bogotá 8.3.1)

#### a) Achievements

- \* There are plenty of editions of the Bible easily accessible as regards price and language, and well disseminated, especially the New Testament.

\* There are Bible editions and biblical materials for students, children and young people, but not for the elderly and the blind.

\* There are plans in place for disseminating the Bible and organizations exist to help with this concern.

\* There are plenty of exegetical commentaries, biblical courses by correspondence, short courses for animators and introductory biblical pamphlets.

\* There is material on content and methodology to help with homilies, teaching, diffusion, and the reading and praying of the Bible.

\* There are specialized periodicals on biblical subjects.

\* There are productions for television slots, articles for periodicals, and records on biblical themes.

\* Efforts are being made to motivate, involve and train editors in the production of biblical material; but, resources are still insufficient.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To publish editions of the Bible with pastoral commentaries, and biblical material with simple content and language.

\* To encourage the support of editors of periodicals and collaboration with them.

\* To disseminate biblical material already prepared.

\* To encourage the production of scenic material.

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To disseminate the Bible extensively.

\* To publish translations of the Bible in local languages.

\* To help other continents to publish Bible editions in their languages.

\* To produce television material.

\* To exchange biblical pastoral material.

\* To promote the dissemination of *Dei Verbum*.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* Despite the fact that people have a good cultural preparation, lack of biblical education requires suitably relevant material.

\* A large part of the material is for specialists but the necessity to

popularize it is felt and there are efforts to do this.

\* It seems that the abundance of material does not influence the practice of the biblical pastoral ministry enough, nor is it used much in the liturgy where there is not enough creativity.

### **4. Recommendations to the members - Structures (Bogotá 8.3.2)**

#### *a) Achievements*

\* There are good relations between episcopal conferences and diocesan structures and biblical associations.

\* Catholic biblical associations exist whose members increase despite the sparse presence of the faithful at liturgical celebrations.

\* In some parts departments, secretariats, and committees for biblical animation are organized; in other parts structures die through lack of plans and creativity.

\* Biblical pastoral centers are strengthening by acquiring independence and having their own headquarters and coordinators; however, some associations still depend directly on other diocesan structures not related to the Bible.

\* The biblical movement seeks and encourages ecumenical contacts.

\* The biblical pastoral ministry is supported by some religious communities.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To create or stimulate support for biblical pastoral ministry.

\* To unify biblical pastoral structures by appointing responsible coordinators.

\* To see to it that diocesan coordinators can work for a determined period.

\* To consolidate the presence of lay people in pastoral structures.

#### *c) Priorities*

\* To establish and maintain links between pastoral structures.

\* To intensify work at diocesan and subregional levels.

#### *d) Interpretation*

\* Structures that generate formation are those that give most impulse to biblical pastoral ministry.

\* The good relationship between Catholic biblical associations and the structures of the Church contributes to the vitalization of both and to the dynamism of the biblical pastoral ministry.

\* More than the structures it is the Bible that contributes to the awakening of the people's faith.

\* The biblical movement helps ecumenism at the institutional level.

### **5. Recommendations to the members - Formation (Bogotá 8.3.3)**

#### *a) Achievements*

\* The relationship between study and prayer, and between study and pastoral ministry has been enhanced by some formation experiences.

\* Some dioceses support and practice the sharing of the Word of God at the level of communities or study circles as a very profitable means of formation.

\* Biblical formation is gaining ground in seminaries; at the basic level it affects both clergy and laity.

\* Biblical formation programs deal with questions of both content and methodology.

\* Some pastoral programs stress the importance of biblical formation as the initial stage of catechesis.

\* Universities encourage the use of historico-critical methods; but, some institutes are not competent at the exegetical level or they do not give a global view of the Bible.

\* Institutions and individual persons give financial support to biblical studies, while some congregations provide specialist and dedicated personnel for a fixed period of time.

\* Visits to biblical places are conducted which aids in the formation of agents.

#### *b) Challenges*

\* To see to it that the Word of God is the soul of the formation of priests and religious.

- \* To emphasize biblical formation in the teaching of the Church.
- \* To instill a biblical sense in religious teaching in schools and colleges.
- \* To ensure the presence and training of lay leaders.
- \* To develop significant training experiences by exchange.
- \* To secure supporting resources for the biblical pastoral ministry.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To set up courses in biblical formation for priests, religious and lay people.
- \* To work in teams with other institutions dedicated to the biblical apostolate and encourage exchange of experiences and material.
- \* To motivate direct contact with and personal experience of the Word of God in communities.
- \* To increase the number of basic biblical courses.

*d) Interpretation*

- \* In biblical reflection groups and communities there is a greater awareness of personal contact with the Word of God as a starting point for a solid formation.
- \* Biblical reading and reflection is very important in the community as an element that throws light on reality.
- \* The importance of basic and specialized formation is being

stressed at all levels to render the biblical apostolate more effective.  
 \* With the shortage of vocations the formation of lay animators is all the more important.

**6. Recommendations to the members - Pastoral use of the Bible (Bogotá 8.3.4)**

*a) Achievements*

- \* There are structures for biblical reflection groups charged with catechesis, animating liturgy and preparing the readers.
- \* There is a rise of reflection groups and communities centered on the Word of God.
- \* There are events that encourage biblical reflection and provide incentives for its apostolate: congresses, meetings, seminars, retreats, conferences.
- \* Lectionaries and New Testaments are being translated into local languages, enriching the liturgy with the Word of God.
- \* There are itineraries for reading and reflecting on the Word of God that give rise to personal and community contact with the Word of God and which encourage its continued reading.

- \* The Word of God occupies a special place in houses of priestly and religious formation.
- \* In some countries there is individual biblical work being carried out.

*b) Challenges*

- \* To make communities aware of the importance of Sacred Scripture in the pastoral work of the Church.
- \* To produce an understanding and faithful reading of the Bible through personal and community contact.
- \* To unite the witness of life to preaching.
- \* To adapt biblical liturgies for children.

*c) Priorities*

- \* To organize biblical reflection meetings centered on the Word of God: retreats, seminars, courses.
- \* To take care that participants at biblical meetings acquire skill in the pastoral use of the Bible.
- \* To utilize adequate methods for reading the Bible and with it throwing light in the life of the community.
- \* To get greater effectiveness from biblical associations.
- \* To encourage biblical evenings and other meetings involving the Word of God at the parochial level.
- \* To increase the number and quality of biblical animators.

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d) Interpretation

- \* In some regions there is creativity in adapting methods of biblical reading and reflection to make biblical pastoral ministry more dynamic.
- \* Faithful reading of the Word of God should bring about coherence between what is read and what is lived.
- \* Interest in the formation of lay animators is growing as a response to the lack of priestly and religious vocations.

7. Recommendations to the members - Challenges to Today's Life (Bogotá 8.3.5)

a) Achievements

- \* Biblical orientation has marked Christian reflection on peace and justice.
- \* Biblical publications, courses, seminars and meetings have thrown light on the present socio-economic and political challenges.
- \* Centers of biblical specialization have made efforts to respond to the questioning of reality today by recourse to historico-critical methods and illuminating through biblical reflection the challenge of the New Evangelization.
- \* Individual presence in the Church is being overcome by community

commitment with the reality of the poor inspired by Sacred Scripture.

- \* Biblical spirituality of creation has risen due to ecological and particularly human problems.
- \* Ecumenical cooperation with sectors of the historical Protestantism occurs; but, the development of fundamentalist sects in certain areas of the Church and society continues where a biblical formation is deficient.
- \* Many courses, seminars and biblical workshops are conducted especially for young people and catechists.

b) Challenges

- \* To relate pastoral plans to reality.
- \* To ensure the relationship between biblical prayer and social action.
- \* To stress the vital commitment of biblical groups by formulating pastoral strategies that respond to the challenges of today's world.
- \* To see to it that the Bible penetrates the environments of secularism and indifference.
- \* To overcome clericalism and totalitarian and reactionary tendencies within the Church.
- \* To respond to the sects and their implicit fundamentalism with biblical formation.
- \* To ensure women's participation in the New Evangelization and the biblical apostolate.
- \* To make the Bible the motor of the New Evangelization.

c) Priorities

- \* To introduce the Bible gradually into multi-cultural environments.
- \* To throw light on social, ethical and religious problems by means of the Bible, which will give rise to corresponding obligations.
- \* To promote commitment to the marginalized in the light of the Word of God.

d) Interpretation

- \* The poor arouse the desire to read Sacred Scripture from a community angle and this kind of reading provokes a commitment to the poor.
- \* The Word of God should unleash processes of social obligation and transformation not only for this continent but also for the whole world.
- \* The poor arouse the awareness of reading the Word of God from a community dimension.
- \* Awareness of social and economic problems is gradually being illuminated by the Word of God.
- \* The advance of materialism in the consumer society and fundamentalism in the sects demands a compromising reading of the Word of God, especially among young people.
- \* Biblical spirituality and biblical pastoral ministry open the way to ecumenical positions.
- \* Christian formation of the youth is the principal challenge in the face of a materialized world.

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